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Report of the Trade and Development Board on its sixty-fifth executive session*

Geneva, 17 July 2017

* The present document is an advance version of the report of the Trade and Development Board on its sixty-fifth executive session, held at the United Nations Office at Geneva on 17 July 2017. It will appear in final form, together with the reports of the sixty-third and sixty-fourth sessions, the thirty-first special session and the sixty-fourth executive session of the Board as *Official Records of the General Assembly, Seventy-second Session, Supplement No. 15* (A/72/15).

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Introduction

The sixty-fifth executive session of the Trade and Development Board was opened by the Vice-President (Estonia) of the Board on Monday, 17 July 2017. In the course of the session, the Board considered in particular issues concerning Africa, as well as other issues pertaining to UNCTAD.

I. Action by the Trade and Development Board

A. Activities undertaken by UNCTAD in support of Africa
(Agenda item 2)

1. The Trade and Development Board took note of the report by the secretariat on activities undertaken by UNCTAD in support of Africa, as contained in document TD/B/EX(65)/2.

B. Designation of non-governmental organizations for the purposes of rule 77 of the rules of procedure of the Trade and Development Board
(Agenda item 5)

2. The Board approved the applications from the China-Africa Business Council, Association Africa 21, World Free Zones Organization and All India Association of Industries, as contained in documents TD/B/EX(65)/R.1, TD/B/EX(65)/R.3, TD/B/EX(65)/R.4 and TD/B/EX(65)/R.5, to be granted observer status with UNCTAD under the general category, and from the Stichting Global Reporting Initiative, as contained in document TD/B/EX(65)/R.2, to be granted observer status with UNCTAD under the special category.

II. President's summary

3. Discussions included opening statements and a presentation of the report on activities undertaken by UNCTAD in support of Africa under agenda item 2, as contained in document TD/B/EX(65)/2.

Opening statements

4. The Secretary-General of UNCTAD made the opening statement to the Trade and Development Board at its sixty-fifth executive session. The Director of the Division for Africa, Least Developed Countries and Special Programmes made a presentation on the agenda item. The representatives of the following delegations made statements: the Sudan, on behalf of the African Group; the United Republic of Tanzania, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China; Bangladesh, on behalf of the least developed countries; Brazil, on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean Countries; Pakistan, on behalf of the Asia-Pacific Group; the European Union, on behalf of the European Union and its member States; China; Lesotho; Tunisia; Zimbabwe; Zambia; Egypt; and South Africa.

5. In his opening remarks, the Secretary-General of UNCTAD noted that, while Africa had experienced slow growth in 2016, a modest recovery was expected in 2017. Africa, however, had made strides towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals on education and gender inclusion. Emphasizing the commitment to Africa, he noted that the UNCTAD Regional Office for Africa, in Addis Ababa, had provided a means to better service member States and the Africa

Union, especially with regard to the Continental Free Trade Area negotiations, building capacities of regional economic communities and engaging with the Pan-African Chamber of Commerce and Industry in exploring how to support manufacturing in Africa. He also highlighted the work UNCTAD had undertaken on illicit financial flows, specifically the *Economic Development in Africa Report 2016: Debt Dynamics and Development Finance in Africa*, which contained a section on illicit financial flows; research work on trade misinvoicing; an inter-agency project on the measurement of illicit financial flows; work on onshore financing centres; and a meeting on taxation and illicit financial flows scheduled for November 2017. Furthermore, the Secretary-General of UNCTAD would attend a meeting in Rwanda with youth entrepreneurs and meet with African Heads of States.

6. In his presentation, the Director noted that UNCTAD work in Africa was aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union's Agenda 2063. While the growth of the middle class in some African countries and the decline in the poverty rate in sub-Saharan Africa since 2000 were positive developments, industrialization had declined markedly across the continent, and youth unemployment in Africa remained a critical challenge. He further noted that the *Economic Development in Africa Report 2017: Tourism for Transformative and Inclusive Growth* highlighted tourism's potential to address Africa's sustainable development challenges. The UNCTAD secretariat provided an overview of the thematic areas covered in the report and highlighted the impact of UNCTAD work at the national, regional and continental levels. Following the report's launch, several countries had made requests for UNCTAD technical assistance on tourism.

7. Several issues were raised in the general statements of delegations.

8. The representatives of several regional groups and delegations commended the increase in funding of technical cooperation activities in Africa in 2016, compared to 2015, and expressed their appreciation to development partners for the support. One regional group noted the need to allocate additional financial resources to the Division for Africa, Least Developed Countries and Special Programmes, and some delegates, to work on Africa.

9. The representatives of several regional groups commended the UNCTAD Regional Office for Africa for its support to the African Union, regional economic communities and UNCTAD member States. One regional group also requested further details on the role of the Regional Office.

10. Many delegations commended UNCTAD for its extensive work programme on Africa.

11. One delegation noted that China was Africa's largest trading partner and had invested significantly in the continent, highlighting infrastructure projects in Djibouti, Kenya and Togo as well as capacity-building initiatives. Chinese investments would support infrastructure and connectivity and generate jobs in Africa.

12. One regional group highlighted the work of the European Union on migration, mobility and science in Africa. Support programmes included the European Union-Africa Infrastructure Trust Fund, the Emergency Trust Fund for Africa and the Africa Investment Facility.

13. Some regional groups and delegations noted their concern regarding the rise of illicit financial flows and their impact on Africa's development. Some delegations proposed that further technical assistance on illicit financial flows should be provided to member States. The secretariat noted that UNCTAD work on illicit financial flows was on the agenda of the Group of 20.

14. Several delegations noted the importance of harnessing technology transfer for development.

15. One regional group noted that its members were looking forward to the external evaluation of Division for Africa, Least Developed Countries and Special Programmes scheduled for 2018.

16. The representatives of some regional groups noted the importance of tourism to Africa's economic development. One regional group noted that the 2017 edition of the *Economic Development in Africa Report* should have been on the agenda of the executive session. Some delegations noted that the results of a study on trade misinvoicing commissioned by UNCTAD and the impact of the activities undertaken in Africa were not sufficiently demonstrated in the report.

Discussions

Activities undertaken by UNCTAD in support of Africa

17. During the debate, the following key points emerged:

(a) The importance of impact assessment and how work on Africa related to the Sustainable Development Goals and the African Union's Agenda 2063;

(b) Building of productive capacities and the need to collaborate with partners in this undertaking;

(c) The need for continued work on illicit financial flows;

(d) The further support required for technology transfer and science, technology and innovation, as essential aspects for enabling structural transformation;

(e) Provision of support to least developed countries to enable graduation with momentum;

(f) The relevance of trade facilitation for spurring growth;

(g) The alignment of research and analysis with topical issues and the political climate;

(h) Consideration of a new business model for technical cooperation (umbrella financing and closer collaboration with United Nations country teams).

Other matters

18. One delegate raised concern about the rescheduling and duration of the executive session. The secretariat emphasized that it had expressed its serious concern regarding postponement of the session to the President of the Trade and Development Board and the regional coordinators. The delegate also expressed concern about compliance with the request for an expert meeting on value addition. The secretariat recalled that UNCTAD had scheduled the expert meeting on value addition in the first quarter of 2018.

19. Some regional groups and delegations expressed concern with slow progress on phase II of the implementation of the Nairobi Maafikiano, the revitalization of the UNCTAD intergovernmental machinery. One regional group requested a road map on the revitalization process, while one delegate requested additional consultations on the process. The secretariat noted that consultations were indeed under way.

III. Organizational matters

A. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work
(Agenda item 1)

20. At its opening plenary meeting, on 17 July 2017, the Trade and Development Board adopted the provisional agenda for the session as contained in document TD/B/EX(65)/1. Accordingly, the agenda for the executive session was as follows:

1. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work
2. Activities undertaken by UNCTAD in support of Africa
3. Designation of non-governmental organizations for the purposes of rule 77 of the rules of procedure of the Trade and Development Board
4. Other business
5. Report of the Trade and Development Board on its sixty-fifth executive session

B. Report of the Trade and Development Board on its sixty-fifth executive session
(Agenda item 5)

21. The Trade and Development Board authorized the completion of the report after the conclusion of the meeting under the authority of the Vice-President.

Annex

Attendance[a]

1. Representatives of the following States members of the Trade and Development Board attended the session:

Algeria
Argentina
Austria
Bahamas
Bangladesh
Benin
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)
Bosnia and Herzegovina
Brazil
Brunei Darussalam
Bulgaria
Chile
China
Colombia
Congo
Czechia
Djibouti
Ethiopia
Ghana
Guatemala
India
Iran (Islamic Republic of)
Iraq
Jordan
Kuwait
Latvia
Lesotho
Madagascar
Mauritius
Mexico
Mozambique
Netherlands
Niger
Pakistan
Peru
Philippines
Poland
Russian Federation
Saudi Arabia
Serbia
Spain
Thailand
Togo
Tunisia
Turkey
Uganda
United Republic of Tanzania
Viet Nam
Zambia
Zimbabwe

2. Representatives of the following member of the Conference attended the session:

Holy See

[a] This attendance list contains registered participants. For the list of participants, see TD/B/EX(65)/INF.1.

3. Representatives of the following non-member observer State attended the session:

State of Palestine

4. The following intergovernmental organizations were represented at the session:

African, Caribbean and Pacific States
European Union
Organization of Islamic Cooperation

5. The following non-governmental organizations were represented at the session:

General category

Engineers of the World
Village Suisse ONG